

Following the 50 Percent Rule

By Joanna R. Turpin
Of Distribution Center Staff



The sales and marketing team at JB Industries, including (left to right) Oscar Lopez, Jennifer Rosser, and Sam Roti, works hard to maintain strong relationships with its' distributors.

Most would say that successful manufacturers stay in business by offering great products that they market well and deliver on time. But that is only half the equation, said Sam Roti, director of sales, JB Industries, Aurora, Ill. "The other 50 percent consists of building and maintaining external and internal relationships."

Following this 50 percent rule is one of the reasons why JB Industries is still successful after 40 years in the air conditioning and refrigeration industry. "We have strong relationships with distributors due to regular communication and contact," said Roti. "We are always in touch with them, either through personal visits, email, or the old-fashioned way of just picking up the phone. We have built solid relationships over the years, and we consider many of our distributors to not only be customers, but friends."

While those external relationships are crucial, it is just as important to maintain strong internal relationships, noted Roti, because good people are necessary to build and sustain a company. "JB firmly believes that the company is only as good as the people working for it. We have tremendous talent in our office and in the

factory; in fact, our factory employees are as dedicated and loyal as they come, with an average tenure of more than 20 years."

Innovative And Unique

JB Industries was founded in 1967 and initially supplied manifolds, hoses, and brass fittings to the HVACR industry. The company later added third-party vacuum pumps and eventually expanded its line and started manufacturing the vacuum pumps. In fact, its best-selling product today is still its original Platinum Series vacuum pump.

These pumps remain popular, said Roti, due to their durability, warranty, and features. "The input we have received over the years from contractors has helped us to continuously improve the features that are most important to the end user. It is different from others in the market, in that it is made in the USA, has a two-year over-the-counter warranty, is able to be repaired in the field, and is subjected to JB's rigorous performance standards."

However, JB Industries is not a company that rests on its laurels. Owners Ron Hill, Jr. and Jeff Cherif, who grew up in the business, are committed to using new technologies in order to create unique and useful products for

the HVACR industry. As Roti noted, the company will never introduce a product that is a "me, too" item. "If we're going to get into a particular segment of the business, it's going to be unique."

JB Industries has introduced several unique products over the last year, including its first refrigerant gas leak detector, called the LD5000 Prowler. The Prowler utilizes proprietary electrochemical sensor technology in order to detect HFCs, HCFCs, as well as SNAP-approved hydrocarbon blends. Its unique features include low battery consumption, circuit stability, long sensor life (over 10 years), and electromechanical function that does not diminish over time or with use.

Also new is The Revolver, an all ball valve manifold, which features four internal metering ball valves that adjust to finite openings for liquid charging. The company also recently introduced a torque tool for Shrader valves that eliminates overtightening and leaks. "Contractors can tighten down the core, then the tool will start torqueing at the factory settings, so they don't have to worry about it being overtightened or not tight enough," said Roti. "Leaks are a major issue in refrigeration and air conditioning, and if we can eliminate that, it's huge."

In response to the significant increase in huffing incidents, JB Industries recently reached an agreement with Novent to distribute its patented refrigerant locking caps. "A number of people die each year due to huffing. It's really a tragedy," said Roti. "Many states are coming out with laws that require new equipment to have refrigerant locking caps, but this product is beneficial in retrofit situations as well."

The innovation will continue over the next 12 months as JB Industries plans to introduce an upgraded digital manifold, a new line of refrigerant charging hoses, and a wireless charging scale. These product introductions will benefit everyone in the supply chain, noted Roti, because contractors like quality tools, and they are a good margin item for distributors.

Easy To Work With

JB Industries works hard at being good partners with their distributors, said Roti, through regular communication and by offering high quality items that come with a good margin, training, and product and marketing support. "We make it easy for distributors to offer JB because we work with each distributor based on their market, customer type, and product offering to ensure the JB items offered complement their existing inventory and avoid product duplication."

JB Industries also stands behind its products, and its brand is well recognized by contractors, which minimizes risk, noted Roti. "Distributors that carry our products know that our warranty rates are minimal, so once a product goes out, it is generally not coming back. Contractors look for our products and have a lot of confidence in them, which means carrying our line is very low risk for distributors."

In addition, distributors receive support from the company should they offer a new JB product and they find it is not moving. "We want to make sure that our distributors are carrying products that help them with their sales, as well as turn their inventory," said Roti. "We do not want our products just sitting around collecting dust, so we work with our distributors, reviewing their inventories, and looking at ways to improve sales."

MANUFACTURER SPOTLIGHT



JB Industries firmly believes that the company is only as good as the people working for it. Many of the employees working in the factory have been there more than 20 years.

As noted earlier, JB Industries prides itself on its strong relationships with distributors, and those relationships will only grow stronger due to the company's involvement in Heating, Airconditioning and Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI). In fact, Roti recently became a Supplier Advisor on HARDI's Board of Directors, and he looks forward to taking on that role. "As chairman of the Supplier Committee, I have




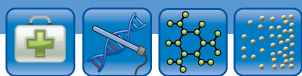
President, Jeff Cherif, is shown with customer service department representatives, from left to right, Patti Burke, Debbie Koester and Nicole Grunwald.

understood over the years the important role that HARDI Supplier members play in the organization and to be selected to the board is an extreme honor."

As a member of HARDI, JB Industries has benefited from participating in many of the organization's programs at the national and regional levels. Roti noted that the interaction with HARDI distributor members is invaluable and that the networking has helped his company better understand what is important to the distributor.

This knowledge is crucial, as the industry faces many challenges going forward. "Product sales through nontraditional distributors, Internet sales, and government regulations will continue to be challenges, but to me, the biggest challenge is going to be people — not only at the manufacturing and distributor level — but at the contractor level as well," said Roti. "HARDI is helping to solve that problem by partnering with NATE, which I think is a good idea that we all need to build on. We need more active distributors and manufacturers to support this so, down the road, we have more properly trained technicians in the field."

With its new role at HARDI, and a focus on creating even more innovative, American-made products in the future, JB Industries is looking forward to the next 40 years in the HVACR industry. As the company notes, "JB is Just Better." 



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